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External parasites such as fleas, ticks and mites cause many pets discomfort at some time in their lives. Not only will parasites such as these cause irritation but they often carry disease and cause skin problems. For this reason it is vital that you check you pet regularly and take immediate action should you discover an infestation. Vets Now has some advice to help you spot the signs and give your pet the best possible treatment:

## Ticks

Most commonly found on dogs ticks are blood sucking parasites that will attach themselves by their mouth to your pet's skin, and if left undisturbed will then feed on your pet's blood until eventually falling off several days later. However, during this time they will cause irritation and often transmit disease (the most common of which in the UK is Lyme disease) so it is therefore vital that they are removed as soon as possible.

Removing ticks is fairly simple. Start by using either a tick removal kit (purchased in most pet stores) or alternatively use tweezers. Firmly grip the tick as close to your pet's skin as possible and without twisting it pull the tick free. Once you have removed the tick avoid any contact with any tick fluids that can carry disease and dispose of the tick as required. Should you think that the tick head is still imbedded in you pets skin or you are not confident about performing the removal yourself it is best to consult your vet to discuss the best course of action.

## Mites

When it comes to mites, rabbits, guinea pigs and rodents are most susceptible with the most common source being low quality hay. So if your pet is moulting heavily or if there are any noticeable patches of scurf or dandruff then its time to check for mites! Should you find an infestation it is vital to seek veterinary advice and remember never to use dog/cat spot on treatments on your rabbit, guinea pig or rodent without consulting your vet as they may be dangerous to your pet.

As there are more than 30,000 species of mite it is best to contact your vet to establish the best course of treatment for your pet in order to ensure that the mites are completely removed and no further irritation is caused.

## Fleas

Fleas are parasites that feed on warm-blooded animals such as cats and dogs. Fleas will cause irritation and often trigger your pet to scratch or bite themselves which will inevitably lead to skin inflammation. In addition, cat and dog fleas may also bite humans causing skin irritation and allergic reactions, so for you and your pet's sake getting rid of fleas at the outset of an infestation is vital!

Treatment for pets may take the form of insecticide aerosol sprays, pour-on products or a tablet. It is best to consult your vet as he/she will explain what products are best, and exactly where and how to use the product.

